

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ

ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЯ

**СБОРНИК**  
**в чест на академик**  
**ХРИСТО**  
**ХРИСТОВ**

ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ ПО СЛУЧАЙ 70 ГОДИНИ  
ОТ РОЖДЕНИЕТО МУ

СОФИЯ. 1988

ИЗДАТЕЛСТВО НА БЪЛГАРСКАТА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ

## JOSEPH SWIRE AND BULGARIA: SOME NOTES TOWARDS A REDIFINITION

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The general outlines of the story of Joseph Swire's sojourn in and departure from Bulgaria are easily stated and generally well-known. He arrived in Sofia in October 1932 as the accredited correspondent for the Reuters press agency and for *The New York Times*. He also worked as an occasional reporter for other British newspapers, including the *Observer*, the *Daily Express* and *The Daily Herald*, as well as for *The Near East and India*, a weekly specialist journal which in 1935 was incorporated with another publication to form the *Great Britain and India*. In 1934 Swire became well acquainted with Damian Velchev for whom he rapidly formed a deep admiration and a strong personal friendship. When Velchev fell from power in 1935 and was then arrested Swire became his defender, and so energetic was this defence that at the end of the year the Bulgarian authorities refused to renew Swire's residence permit. In 1936 the expelled journalist conducted a passionate campaign to prevent the carrying out of the death sentence passed on Velchev that spring. Three years later Swire published his *Bulgarian Conspiracy*, a vitriolic attack on those whom he considered responsible for the persecution of Velchev and for Bulgaria's sufferings. Swire's last public mention with regard to Bulgaria was, to my knowledge, when his name was quoted in the trial of Traicho Kostov in 1949.

Swire's association with Bulgaria was one which clearly created tensions and left bitterness, but it would be incorrect to assume from outward appearances that Swire's attitudes to all aspects of Bulgarian life and towards the Bulgarian people in general were always negative. After his death in 1979 his widow kindly allowed me to have custody of his private diaries, letters and newspaper cuttings, and a study of these papers, which are still in my possession, reveal a more complex and a more interesting picture than that given by a simple examination of the story.

In the first place it must be said that Swire's strong character and often unorthodox methods angered many people. The British community in Sofia found him difficult to understand for he did not accept their *mores* either in the social sense or in the political world. In the Reuters' office in London there remains a file concerning Swire which the present directors of that firm were kind enough to allow me to inspect and in that file there is a memorandum dated 6 December 1934 from Mr Bernard Rickartson-Hatt, the editor-in-chief to 'MD', almost certainly an abbreviation for Managing Director. Written when Swire was in Athens in December 1935 to report on the return of the Greek King — and it was whilst he was on this trip that he learned that he was to be expelled from Bulgaria — the memorandum reveals the light in which Swire was regarded by the British expatriates in Bulgaria:



This is to confirm our conversation of last night about J. S. Swire, our string correspondent in Sofia.

You told me that Mrs Sydney Waterlow, wife of our Minister in Athens, [Waterlow had previously been in Sofia — RJC] spoke in rather disparaging terms of Swire in a conversation she had with you at dinner recently.

Mrs Waterlow did not make any direct accusation against Swire but she implied that he was rather an oddity and was not taken seriously by responsible people in Sofia.

In the British ministry in Sofia the responsible officials were in fact more than ready to listen to what Swire, with his close association with Velchev, had to say about Bulgarian affairs, but they were also dubious about his way of doing things and warned him against overinvolvement with one faction in Bulgarian political life. At the beginning of 1935 Mr John, 'Jock', Balfour reported from the Sofia Legation to the Foreign Office that

both the Minister and I have cautioned Swire to be careful of what he reports in the present uncertain state of affairs. Over enthusiastic backing of the Velcheff horse may well land him in difficulties at some future date, from which we do not wish to have the unpleasant task of trying to extricate him.<sup>1</sup>

When Swire's expulsion was demanded by the Bulgarian authorities the British Minister, Sir Henry Bentinck, wrote rather primly, 'I had warned Mr Swire last December and subsequently to be careful, but I fear he has at times shown a lack of judgement'.<sup>2</sup> In the Legation Swire found little support. One junior official Llewellyn, accused him of self-advertisement,<sup>3</sup> whilst Swire described Bentinck's conduct in very bitter terms: Bentinck's whole attitude has been wholly deplorable and weak-kneed — he said he wished I'd go quietly as he hated rows'.<sup>4</sup> When Swire's book was published this angered many who had previously supported him, one former admirer writing to Reuters to complain that 'Even his so-called friends Damian Velchevists and Protogerovists (Macedonians) are disgusted with the contents and distortions of facts', and he went on to complain that the book was more like a pamphlet as it was filled with venom' and pointed to 'all the bad things and none of the good in the last thirty years of Bulgarian history'.<sup>5</sup>

When it came to attacks upon his book Swire defended himself with his customary vigour. After completing the book but before its publication Swire found himself in Spain as Reuters' correspondent with the hard-pressed Republican forces. The publisher's lawyer had quibbled at the book's frequent allegations of direct complicity in murder by many politicians, and such accusations, without substantial proof, are easily made actionable under Britain's very stringent libel laws. Swire's publisher, Hale, therefore took fright. Swire, not uncharacteristically, lost his patience.

If Hale is going to be frightened by the report of a lawyer who, knowing neither the subject nor the sources of reference, suggests that there is a bare chance of trouble, then the position is hopeless and I do not see how one is ever to expose international scandals or make a stand against any oppression which is in the least crafty and subtle.<sup>6</sup>

Two weeks later came an even more forthright outburst.

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<sup>1</sup> Balfour to O'Malley, private, 12 Jan. 1935. Foreign Office papers, Public Record Office London, FO 371/19486.

<sup>2</sup> Bentinck to F O, tel. en clair, 3 Oct. 1935, F O 371/19491.

<sup>3</sup> Diary, 21 Dec. 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Diary, 23 Dec. 1935.

<sup>5</sup> The letter to Reuters is dated 20 May, 1939, Reuters archives, London. I would like to thank the directors and staff of Reuters for permission to use this file and for their help in making it available to me.

<sup>6</sup> Swire to Otto Theiss, 13 May 1938. B3/8. Swire's letters were arranged in a number of files, to which I have given the designations such as B3, V1, etc.



I have just got back from Granollers. I suppose that if, five years hence, I write in a book that on this sunny 31st of May Franco's bombers massacred women and children by the score in an entirely defenceless town I shall — by your reckoning — expose myself and my publisher to a libel action. What I have said in *Bulgarian Conspiracy* is FACT — and I personally am prepared to face any court to prove it . . . THE BOOK MUST BE PUBLISHED WITHOUT MORE DELAY.

You will forgive me, I know, if the foregoing paragraphs are bluntly phrased; but this is not entirely a picnic here — —and this hitch about *Bulgarian Conspiracy* drives me to exasperation in my present state. I have written facts which everybody in the Balkans knows to be true — and there are thousands ready, even longing, for the chance to come forward in open court to prove that they are true.<sup>7</sup>

Swire's confidence in the correctness of his views and the degree of support which they commanded in the Balkans was very much the result of the sympathy and goodwill which was shown to him at the time of his clash with the Bulgarian government. The Vienna correspondent of the *Daily Express*, for example, wrote that he 'was sorry to hear that the gangsters who run Bulgaria had forced you out of the country.'<sup>8</sup> Much more important to Swire was the sympathy and support he had received inside Bulgaria. Just before his expulsion Swire returned from Athens, his plane being forced by bad weather to divert to Belgrade. In the train which brought him on from Belgrade to Sofia he was told by a Velchevite whom he met by chance that he was considered the best reporter in Bulgaria.<sup>9</sup> More dramatic was the tale recounted by Swire when he wrote to Rickartson-Hatt justifying his journalistic activity in Bulgaria.

I think that if you had had the opportunities that I have had of studying Bulgarian intrigue at first hand, you would have taken a stronger line (with) the Bulgarian government. Briefly, I believe the root of the whole trouble is that I have been preparing a history of Bulgarian conspiracy . . . and the authorities, aware of this, are scared of the revelations which, inevitably, such a book will contain. My despatches were all accurately based upon the knowledge which I have acquired through my studies. When I tell you that a former Minister, who was twice thrown out of power by "my friend" Damian Velcheff wept in the street when I told him I was leaving, and when I tell you that a former chief censor, very, visibly moved, exclaimed: "My God! Why are you going now, when we need you so? You are the only foreign correspondent who writes the truth fearlessly", you will see that there is another side to the question.<sup>10</sup>

The side of the question which Swire supported was that represented by Velchev. The two had much in common. Swire, like many young men in the 1930s was exasperated with existing political and social conditions in Europe but had not committed himself to any particular political party or creed. His desire to protect Europe and his own country from political gangsterism and terrorism led him to a deep distrust of the fascist regimes of Rome and Berlin, and also led him to support all elements which, he believed, would provide protection against any other totalitarian force. He was convinced that Velchev, with his antipathy to the political establishment in Sofia, to the intrigues of the Macedonian chauvinists, and to the machinations of German and Italian diplomacy, would best further the real interests of Bulgaria and of the majority of its people, and would best defend the peace of the Balkans and of Europe. In a private letter to the editor of *The Daily Herald* Swire vigorously defended Velchev against the charge of fascism. The letter, written in October 1935, arose from the fact that the newspaper, for the second time that year, had sensationalised reports from Swire and had given the impression that Britain could never support someone who, it maintained, was bent upon destroying political freedoms and parliamentarianism. The first occasion on which this distortion of Swire's reporting had taken place had been in January.

<sup>7</sup> Swire to Theiss, 31 May 1938, B3/11.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis Clarke to Swire, Vienna, 17 Jan. 1936, B4/4.

<sup>9</sup> Dairy., 15 Dec. 1935.

<sup>10</sup> Swire to Rickartson-Hatt, Athens, 1 Dec. 1935.



When I see you I will explain just how much harm you did to the Liberal-Socialist cause here by publications last January. . . . The attitude of the HERALD is again causing dismayed comment here among Socialists, Agrarians and Moderates — it being said that the HERALD's attitude proves that Great Britain is against Velchev and supports the reactionaries. . . . Fantastic to you — yes; but one cannot convince people here that it is fantastic. Perhaps you argue that any man who suppresses a parliament must be a Fascist; but there are Parliaments and Parliaments, and you probably don't realise the role played by Mihailoff's terrorists — it is hard for anyone to realise it. If deputies, and even Ministers dare not speak for fear of being shot directly they leave the Parliament, does that Parliament really serve any useful democratic purpose?<sup>11</sup>

Nor would Swire allow the contention that Velchev, had sought to establish a military dictatorship; indeed he argued that Velchev had staged his coup in May 1934 to prevent dictatorship and, much to his ultimate disadvantage, would not thereafter allow the military to take complete power. Shortly after returning to London in 1936 Swire addressed to the Foreign Editor of *The Times* a long memorandum in which he attempted to set out the background to Velchev's career. In this memorandum he stated:

Finally, there were preparations by the Mihailovists and by Tsankoff's National Socialist to seize power, aided by their respective supporters in the Army. So Velchev forestalled them by seizing power by bloodless coup on May 19, 1934. A civil government was established, for Velchev, despite the insistence of the serving officers among his collaborators, ruled that the Army should not govern but should merely support the Government until popular support was organised. Velchev deplored the use of the military — but he argued that only the Army could purge itself from elements supporting the terrorists; and it was his desire, as he told me in 1934, to get the Army "back to barracks". But the Army would not go and eventually overruled him, seizing power from him in January 1935. In fact Velchev and Gheorghiev fell for opposing military government — as they had opposed the government by terror of Volkov and his terrorist allies.<sup>12</sup>

The terrorists to whom Swire referred were those of the extreme Macedonian faction within BMORO. Throughout his work in Sofia Swire had been increasingly fearful of the effect this group was having upon the everyday life of Bulgaria, of the threat it posed to the peace of the Balkans, and of the opportunities it offered to Italian and German diplomacy. It is probable that it was Velchev's determination in the face of these dangers which most endeared him to Swire, and there is no doubt that Swire both believed in such dangers and held Velchev responsible for overcoming them. In the memorandum to the Foreign Editor of *The Times* quoted above he wrote:

The terrible Macedonian terrorist organisation had collapsed without resistance directly the Army was turned against it; and its suppression, due entirely to Velchev, undoubtedly saved Bulgaria from attack when King Alexander was assassinated. (For your private information M. Yevtich [Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia — RJC] himself assured me that if the terrorists had not been suppressed in Bulgaria by a Government in whose sincerity Yugoslavia believed, nothing would have restrained the Yugoslav Army from invading Bulgaria<sup>13</sup>).

The suppression of Macedonian terrorism would bring about better relations with Yugoslavia and, therefore, make for stability in the Balkans. Stable Balkans would be less susceptible to the blandishments and revisionist pressures of Rome and Berlin and would therefore further British and western European interests. This was in line with Velchev's hopes because, wrote Swire, 'Velchev has always insisted that in foreign affairs Bulgaria should be guided by Great Britain. . . .'<sup>14</sup> Indeed in later letters and newspaper articles Swire was careful to link the 1934

<sup>11</sup> Swire to MacBride, 8 Nov. 1935. B4/16.

<sup>12</sup> Swire to the Foreign Editor, *The Times*, 11 March 1936. V1/2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



coup with foreign affairs. Typical of many such writings is a letter to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, written after the war.

On 17 May 1934 the Prime Minister of the day, Moushanov, announced that Goering was about to visit Sofia. On 19 May a military coup d'état took place, planned and directed by Colonel Damian Velchev . . . The coup was bloodless. There were no executions, no arrests — save of a few proved terrorist assassins. A wave of relief swept the country. And while this Government remained in power, nothing more was heard of Goering. . . But in 1935 Tsar Boris skilfully regained absolute power — by dividing his opponents upon domestic issues. . . No sooner did Tsar Boris hold the reins securely again than Goering's deferred visit to Sofia took place — on 26 May, 1935.<sup>15</sup>

Swire was convinced that Velchev's pacific policy and his desire for conciliation with Yugoslavia was in tune with the wishes of the vast majority of the Bulgarian nation. In an article published in *The Near East and India* on 10 January, 1935 Swire had expanded more fully on the relationship between Velchev, the army and the people. The article was headed 'A Pacifist People' and began:

Bulgaria today is pacifist. There may have been in some quarters grave doubts upon the subject while she was dominated by Macedonian terrorists and ruled by politicians who were in no danger, themselves, of being called upon to make war. But behind the present regime stands the Army; and the Army in democratic Bulgaria, springs from the people, of whom 80 percent are peasants. Most of the officers come from humble homes and know the abject poverty of those homes. The masses desire peace — and an economic revival which cannot come by war. So pacifist they will remain . . .

For Swire it was entirely understandable that the army officer Velchev should be in tune with national feelings on military policy for, Swire believed, his hero represented popular aspirations of every sort. And, it must also be noted if a full record of Swire's and Velchev's views to be kept, Swire saw his friend as an important defence against the advance of Communism in Bulgaria, an advance which Swire, like so many of his generation, feared. He told the editor of *The Daily Herald*:

Velchev told me last year that he was not afraid of the Communists because he intended to introduce social legislation which would satisfy the masses, and then the real Communists, who are numerous, would be powerless.<sup>16</sup>

In a letter to his father Swire described Velchev simply as 'one of the few Bulgarians who puts the interests of the poor people before that of the "big business" interests'.<sup>17</sup> And Swire was quite convinced that the people recognized Velchev's concern for them, and gave him political support because of it. When Velchev was before the court in Sofia, Swire — then in Vienna *en route* back to Britain — wrote a memorandum on the significance of the trial then in progress.

The accused, who on 19 May, 1934 were hailed in Bulgaria as the liberators of the country from terror and sham democracy, are leaders of the movement for collaboration between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, whereas the forces behind the prosecution seem to stand for the old and dangerous order of things prevailing until two years ago. Thus, it is said, the whole future of Bulgaria, of the Balkans, and even of Europe, depends upon the outcome of the trial. The patience of the masses is becoming exhausted, and revolution and anarchy may be the consequence, it is thought, of any tendency to restore the old system. Meantime Velchev is hailed as a hero and martyr in all democratic and agrarian circles.<sup>18</sup>

Two months later, in writing to the Foreign Editor of *The Times*, Swire again insisted that the Agrarian factions in Bulgaria were pro-Velchev. He argued that

<sup>15</sup> Swire to the editor of the Manchester Guardian, 12 Oct. 1946. Art/2.

<sup>16</sup> Swire to MacBride, 8 Nov. 1935. B4/16.

<sup>17</sup> Swire to Rev A Swire, 10 May 1935. BiA/3V.

<sup>18</sup> Memo by Swire, Vienna, 9 January 1936. V7/22.



Velchev's role in the events of 9 June, 1923 had been a subordinate and even a moderating one for which the Agrarians were now grateful.

At the time he was a retired officer, employed in a bank and studying law, but on the eve of the coup he took over command of the Military School which he commanded thereafter for five years. His part in the coup ended at 03.00 on the morning of June 9 when he reported to General Volkov, chief organiser of the coup and president of the Officers' League. His men shot one policeman who fired at them as they were taking over government buildings in accordance with the role allotted to them; but Velchev himself saved the life of an Agrarian Minister (Nedelko Atanasov — who told me the story himself) from the band of young Macedonian terrorists organized secretly by Volkov (without the consent of the others) and led by Ivan Mihailov. The Agrarians do not hold his participation in this coup against Velchev — on the contrary, they look upon him as their protector from terror.<sup>19</sup>

To the editor of *The Daily Herald* he reported. 'In the last few days I have talked with three friends who were all Ministers under Stamboliisky and were all arrested by Velchev's men in Sofia in June 1923. Today they are all Velchevists'.<sup>20</sup> From his diary it seems that the ex-ministers concerned were, Omarchevski, Todorov and Atanasov.<sup>21</sup>

Championship of Velchev and his ideas naturally made Swire a fierce critic of Velchev's enemies, that is of the reactionary right in general and of the King in particular. Swire saw Velchev as the 'victim of reaction', adding that in 1934 Velchev had told him that 'he feared that if such reaction occurred, it would lead to revolt by the masses, who will stand no further oppression'.<sup>22</sup> Velchev's contest with the King produced the assumption amongst many observers that Velchev was a republican. This Swire was at pains to deny.

Velchev's attitude towards King Boris was simply that the King should reign but should not govern since, under the Constitution, he bore no responsibility: and the proposed Amendment to the Constitution ran: "The Prime Minister shall be responsible to the King and to the Parliament for all the acts of the Government". Velchev was never a republican, but a frantic propaganda that he was republican contributed to his downfall. The limitations imposed upon the King were intended simply, as Velchev said at the time "to prevent the Right Reactionaries from raising the Royal Standard in revolt against us." In June 1934 Velchev had a long interview with the King and afterwards reported to the Cabinet that the King was with them and would support them.<sup>23</sup>

In another letter Swire wrote that 'It cannot be too often emphasized that Velchev is NOT a republican: but he wished to clip the King's wings so that he could do no more harm, either wittingly or unwittingly.' And in the same source we read a little earlier that not only was Velchev not a republican but in reality a defender, albeit perhaps a reluctant one, of the monarchy:

Another mistake made in England is to back King Boris because he drives railway engines and occasionally shakes hands with peasants. Either he is deliberately reactionary, or he is a weak-kneed flop exploited by the reactionaries. The peasants are muttering angrily about "that Coburg". Velchev once told me he thought the day would come when he would have to save the monarchy—and if he lives I think he probably will. I believe the King himself is beginning to realise that too.<sup>24</sup>

We know full well that such cooperation between Boris and Velchev never did take place, nor did Swire's naive belief in it last very long. Soon after Velchev's arrest he was writing in very bitter and scathing terms of Boris.

<sup>19</sup> Swire to the Foreign Editor of the *The Times*, 11 March 1936. V1/1.

<sup>20</sup> Swire to MacBride, 8 Nov. 1935. B4/16V.

<sup>21</sup> Diary, 19 Oct. 4 Nov. 1935.

<sup>22</sup> Swire to Foreign Editor of the *The Times*, 11 March 1936. V1/5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Swire to MacBride, 8 Nov. 1935. B4/16V.



A story is reliably told in Belgrade that when King Alexander visited Sofia at the end of September 1934 King Boris, before presenting Velchev to him, remarked: "This is our Apis". . . . Next day King Boris suddenly asked King Alexander: "How did you rid yourself of your Apis?", to which Alexander replied that not he but a responsible Government had "liquidated" Apis and his friends. And when Alexander, on returning to Belgrade, was discussing his visit to Sofia with his Cabinet he said (according to this story): "King Boris tried to get me to prescribe a formula whereby he could get rid of Velchev. Velchev had better take care."<sup>25</sup>

This was of course pure speculation and we have no evidence that Boris ever made such remarks, but that Swire could report them is a measure of his own distrust of the King. This distrust put Swire at odds with his own government in London and with British representatives in Sofia.

In Bulgaria there was a widespread and not entirely unjustified assumption that British foreign policy was biased in favour of the King. In January 1935 the First Cruiser Squadron of Britain's Mediterranean Fleet, headed by *H M S London*, visited Varna, and its senior officer, Admiral im Thurn, dined with the King. The visit had taken place at a time of considerable political tension, for cabinet changes were being introduced which in fact marked the first step in the removal of Velchev from power. That such a visit could take place at such a time was seen by many in Sofia as an indication that Britain approved of the cabinet changes. This was the interpretation which, said Swire, the King and his supporters had put upon the visit; he told the editor of *The Daily Herald*, 'If everyone got his deserts, somebody at home ought to be shot for sending the *London* here in January — you've no idea how that was exploited by the reactionaries.'<sup>26</sup> Even the Foreign Office was aware of the advantage taken of the visit, 'Jock' Balfour writing privately to O'Malley on 15 January,

When yesterday receiving in audience Rear-Admiral im Thurn, (Commanding the First Cruiser Squadron, Mediterranean Fleet), who, as I am reporting officially, came up here for the day from Varna to pay his respects at the Palace, the King said that a dangerous Government crisis had been averted a few days ago. His Majesty, who seemed nervous lest he should be overheard, told the Admiral, *sotto voce*, that without wishing to indulge in self-flattery he could congratulate himself on having succeeded in calming the situation. At the informal luncheon party to which the Admiral was afterwards entertained at the royal residence of Vrania, both the King and the Queen were in excellent spirits. I noticed, however, during the luncheon that, whereas their Majesties engaged my wife and the Admiral in agitated conversation, they seemed to show definite restraint towards their neighbours — the President of the Council and Madame Gheorghiev.<sup>27</sup>

In a private letter to Orme Sergeant in London the British Minister in Sofia, Bentinck, noted that 'according to His Majesty our cruiser turned the scale in the Monarchy's favour.'<sup>28</sup> There is no evidence that the visit of the British ships had any domestic political objective, and indeed the impending cabinet changes in Sofia could not have been known in British circles when the arrangements for the visit had been made, and Admiral im Thurn could scarcely have cancelled his royal luncheon when the political moves were made — to have done so would have caused a diplomatic incident.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, perhaps Boris knowingly used the Bri-

<sup>25</sup> Memo by Swire entitled 'The Conspiracy Trial in Bulgaria', Vienna, 9 Jan. 1936. V7/21-2.

<sup>26</sup> Swire to MacBride, 8 Nov. 1935. B4/16

<sup>27</sup> Balfour to O'Malley, postscriptum dated 15 Jan. to a private letter of 12 Jan. 1935. F O 371/19486.

<sup>28</sup> Bentinck to Orme Sergeant, private, 4 Feb. 1935. *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> For a recent statement of the myth regarding the visit of *H M S London* see: К. Манчев, В. Бистрицки. България и нейните съседи. 1931—1939. Политически и дипломатически отношения. С., 1978. с. 134, wherein it is stated that by the visit 'British political circles overtly exhibited their preference for the king and the monarchy.' It is true that British foreign policy makers supported Boris, but it is incorrect to assert that they 'overtly' used the visit of the *London* to manifest this support.



tish presence to effect these changes, realising that violent opposition to them would be more difficult with Bulgaria more in the international eye because of the squadron's presence. When Swire was finally expelled from Bulgaria he again feared that the British legation was, wittingly or unwittingly, being used to strengthen the anti-Velchev faction. At this time the British Minister intervened in a number of minor ways, criticizing associates of Swire's and the manner in which Swire himself was carrying out his duties. Swire wrote of such conduct:

It is numerous trivial facts such as [these] . . . which, in their sum, have created great consternation and a widespread conviction in Sofia that the British Legation deliberately supports the chauvinist and former so-called Macedonian Revolutionary circles, a conviction which these circles are at pains to encourage by an energetic and clever propaganda. It is thought, in consequence, that British policy is to prevent a close rapprochement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, since the British Legation supports the elements opposed to that rapprochement and inspired by fanatical irredentist aims. Propaganda of this sort, though it sounds trivial to English ears, may if allowed to continue do untold harm to British prestige in a country seething with Agrarian discontent against the chauvinists and terrorists, a country which occupies a vital strategic position and is a prey to the most energetic Italian and German propaganda. The lessons of 1914-15 should, moreover, be recalled — for then British diplomatic ignorance of Bulgarian popular feeling enabled Germany to draw Bulgaria into the war, by means of the Bulgarian palace and chauvinist circles, upon the side of the Central Powers.<sup>30</sup>

Later, in the early months of 1936, the Foreign Office confirmed Swire's suspicions when it refused to intervene to plead against the death sentence passed on Velchev. There were sound if uninspiring diplomatic reasons for this stance. Velchev's supporters, with Swire at their head, were proclaiming that Velchev represented the cause of good relations between Sofia and Belgrade, but in that case could Britain intervene when Yugoslavia was not lifting a finger to help? Furthermore, if Britain took diplomatic action over Velchev she would lay herself open to charges of interference in Bulgaria's internal affairs, and there were hints in German news-agency reports that the Germans were prepared to make difficulties about this.<sup>31</sup> Sound as British policy might have been, it was unlikely to impress one so headstrong and passionate as Swire who for long continued to believe that Boris's political victory in 1935-36 was 'due, in no small measure, to British diplomatic ineptitude and a penchant for monarchs whether good, bad or indifferent.'<sup>32</sup> Swire was also ready to acknowledge that Boris's influence in London was in part the result of his own ability:

No foreign ruler has received in this country more favourable publicity than King Boris, and this is probably because he inherited from his father King Ferdinand what Dr Seton-Watson calls 'the specifically Magyar quality of self-advertisement in the Foreign Press, of throwing dust in the dazzled eyes of strangers.' Though less direct than his father, he has all his father's genius for intrigue and intolerance of criticism.<sup>33</sup>

Swire's criticisms of Bulgaria — and to some degree of British policy — after 1936 are essentially criticisms of its ruling clique. The converse of this should be, and indeed was, that when Swire approved of Bulgaria's governors he was active in promoting closer relations between Britain and Bulgaria. In June 1934 he suggested to Bentinck a scheme to promote increased knowledge and experience

<sup>30</sup> Swire. Report on the Expulsion of Mr J Swire from BULGARIA, and Questions arising therefrom. 12 Feb. 1936. V4/15.

<sup>31</sup> See Bentinck to Eden, 51, 29 Feb. 1936, F O 371/20370, and Bentinck to Foreign Office, tel. en clair, 2 Mar. 1936, F O 371/20371. For a more detailed description of Swire's campaign to save Velchev from the gallows, see my contribution to the forthcoming volume of essays in honour of the late Hugh Seton-Watson.

<sup>32</sup> Swire to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 Oct. 1946. Art/2.

<sup>33</sup> *Quarterly Review*. July 1939, p. 7 Art. 39.



of British affairs amongst Bulgarian journalists. In a letter to Bentinck giving details of this proposal Swire wrote:

I have proposed that six Bulgarian journalists, editors or sub-editors of different newspapers, who have not hitherto visited Great Britain, should be invited; and all their expenses should be paid from the time they leave Sofia until they return — for it is, I think, essential that the invitation should be made generously or not at all, and that their visit should last two full weeks. So far as I know there is no Bulgarian journalist who has ever visited England, and there are very few — either journalists or reporters — who speak English, even brokenly.

The reasons for the proposal were interesting enough to warrant recital at length.

1) The newspapers are the chief literature of the Bulgarian masses. Books take second place — every Bulgarian reads his newspaper, but only a percentage read books. Thus the newspapers are a vital medium for propaganda.

2) Bulgarian journalists occupy a very high place in the country and are very highly thought of. Often journalists become ministers and ministers journalists — there are any number of journalists. Thus the Bulgarian journalist is a man of importance, partly for himself and partly on account of the influence he exercises, through his papers, over the masses.

3) Various European countries, alive to the importance of the press, and interested in Bulgaria for political or economic reasons, have set a precedent. During the last two years Bulgarian journalists have been invited to visit Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Rumania, and their expenses have been paid.

4) Apart from obvious commercial interests Great Britain has, I maintain, a very vital political interest in Bulgaria, chiefly on account of the Dardanelles question. Bulgaria's strategic importance was proved up to the hilt during the World War — and she entered that war against us largely because we neglected to take, in time, obvious steps to prevent that occurrence. The disastrous consequences are matters of common knowledge. But, during recent years, no serious steps whatever have been taken to make British propaganda in this country, whereas other European countries have been spending large sums of money for this purpose, maintaining schools and clubs. It may be argued that British prestige is already high enough — that British power and culture are widely known. This I contest. It was. But now it is in grave danger of eclipse by the activities of others. The memories of the masses are short, and the press is the best medium for reviving them.

5) Bulgarian journalists visiting England would write their experiences and impressions in a series of articles. But even more important, when events occur in England or affecting England, these journalists will have perspective or "background." These points held good before the change of regime here, [19 May 1934 — RJC] and they have more than ever now, since the newspapers will be obliged, owing to the censorship and the suppression of party politics, to turn more than ever before to foreign affairs for "copy". There is, moreover, the value of personal contacts between those Bulgarians who visit England and the friends they will make there; and the mere fact that an invitation is issued would make a most favourable impression.

Swire did not think that the proposed scheme would be lavishly expensive, estimating it a total cost of five hundred pounds *per capita*. As to the itinerary he thought it should include a day in Fleet Street, two days "sight-seeing" in London and visits to York, Edinburgh, the Trossachs, Glasgow, the Lake District, Liverpool, Manchester, Southampton, Portsmouth and Aldershot, with opportunities to see industrial undertakings, (coal, steel, cotton, ship-building) agriculture, and naval and military spectacles'. Finally he also had ideas as to who should arrange the tour

It may be contended that it would be a delicate matter for the British government to invite Bulgarian journalists — that it would create a precedent and why should Bulgarians be asked? It would be simple, however, for the idea to come, in the first place, from Lord Noel-Buxton, Sir Edward Bayle and other members of the Balkan Committee whose particular interest in Bulgaria is well-known and who might NOMINALLY bear the expense, while the arrangements could probably be entrusted to such public-spirited bodies as REUTERS and THE PRESS ASSOCIATION who would, I feel sure, gladly lend their aid and would be very well qualified to make the arrangements. Beyond providing the necessary funds therefore, there would be no need for any official intervention if it was thought undesirable that the plan should be carried out officially.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Swire to Bentinck, 15 June 1934, B4/13.



Nothing ever came of Swire's plan nor of another scheme he put forward for improving Anglo-Bulgarian relations, this time one with much more weighty political content. In August 1933 Swire, had strongly argued Bulgaria's case over an outlet on the Aegean and in April 1934, even before Velchev had taken office, he returned to this theme in a letter to Mr Stephen Heald of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. Swire said he felt '... more convinced than ever that Bulgaria is the key to the Straits on the one hand and the Balkans on the other: and that the key to Bulgaria's heart is an Aegean seaboard.'<sup>35</sup> He also sensed that Bulgaria, this vital strategic point, was under threat from the totalitarian powers.

On the one hand, he feared Communist subversion sponsored by the Soviet Union, and thus he urged strong British and French support for Bulgaria as the best means of preventing this form of Russian encroachment. On the other hand he was concerned at the economic tutelage which the Nazi regime was establishing in Bulgaria as in other East European states. The threat for the future was as clear to Swire as the remedies which needed to be taken against it:

One cannot yet foretell into what groups the powers will fall if and when war does break out again. But whatever the grouping may be, it is vitally important that we should bring Bulgaria in on our side . . . Bulgaria, by joining the central powers in 1915, prolonged the war by two years. Numerically she is small — but strategically she is a giant. So we must be in a position to offer her such possibilities and opportunities as will bring her in on our side if a crash comes. There must be no hesitation or delay or futile diplomacy as in 1915. So we must prepare NOW for the necessary action.

As has been noted, Swire believed that the Key to Bulgaria's support lay in the Aegean question and in this there was nothing singular, but what was unusual was the method he suggested for meeting Bulgaria's demands.

If we offered Bulgaria immediate occupation of Greek Thrace from the Mesta line to the Turkish frontier, including Porto Lagos and Dedeagach, she would come in with us. . . My proposal is simply this — that we should be prepared to cede Cyprus to Greece provided she ceded Thrace to Bulgaria. Cyprus is a rich island, it is no use to us 2, the Greeks clamour for it, it IS Greek, and its area is the same or greater than Thrace east of the Maritza.<sup>36</sup>

Swire's proposal seems to have been taken more seriously than perhaps it deserved. The objections to it, from a British point of view, were set out at length and with patience by Heald.

The general impression is that, while fully recognizing the force of your argument about the danger of growing Russian influence in Bulgaria and agreeing that everything possible should be done to keep Bulgaria "sweet", it will be extremely hard to make concessions without at the same time spoiling good relations with other states whose friendship and co-operation is clearly important to our position in the Balkans and in the Eastern Mediterranean, having special regard to the air route to the middle East and India and beyond, and to Egypt and South Africa, never, of course, forgetting the Suez Canal.

If, therefore, one is to counteract Russian influence, which in any case must act as a counterpoise to the undoubtedly growing German influence in Bulgaria, by making concessions at the expense of Greece and to the annoyance of Turkey, it is considered that the price would be too high. I agree that in due course Bulgaria's claims to access to the sea should receive consideration but it must be remembered that in recent history she only possessed the Aegean seaboard for a short period, i. e. from 1913 to 1918. So that except on grounds of economic necessity, which is by no means clearly proved, she has little real legal claim to such an outlet, and in any case Article 48 of the Treaty of Neuilly only undertook "to ensure the *economic* outlets of Bulgaria to the Aegean Sea".

To turn now to the question of Greece; in the first place, would Greece consider that the cession of Cyprus would compensate her for the loss of Thrace and of contiguity with her new friend Turkey? In any case such an exchange would be contrary to the Greco-Turkish Treaty of September 1933. Might she not regard the access of a Slav nation to the northern Aegean as

<sup>35</sup> Swire to Heald, 2 April 1934. B4/15.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



the beginning of the forward movement the Slavs which she has always feared, and which might possibly be extended to Salonika if the Yugoslavs took it into their heads to give practical effect to a policy which has always been in the immediate background?

In any case, would we consider the potential gain from an arrangement whereby we obtained Bulgarian co-operation (provided, of course, that we did not thereby lose Greek friendship) worth the cession of the Island of Cyprus, which, in view of developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, including the air route to India and Australia and the completion of the pipe line to Haifa, has assumed a special strategic significance?

The general impression I have gained from various conversations is that the answer is "no".<sup>37</sup>

Even had Swire's idea been accepted in informed but unofficial circles in London it would not have been popular in the Foreign Office, nor perhaps even in Sofia. When the Bulgarian newspaper, *Mir*, raised the question of the Aegean a year later, a Foreign Office official in London minuted, 'The Bulgarians continue to harp rather vaguely on the injustice of the Treaty. No one sympathises with their claim to an Aegean port as long as they continue to demand full sovereignty over it.'<sup>38</sup> A few months later the same official noted in a memorandum recording a conversation with the British minister in Sofia, 'The King [of Bulgaria — RJC] has recently told Mr Bentinck that he did not regard the question of the Aegean outlet as actual.'<sup>39</sup>

The notion of exchanging Cyprus for the Aegean coast was wildly impractical and was never acted upon. A similar fate awaited another scheme put forward by Swire to the Foreign Office at a time when much of Europe, including Britain, had already been plunged into the horrors of the Second World War.

In an article for the *Quarterly Review* in the summer of 1939 Swire noted that in the First World War 'bands of irregulars directed by the General Staff and financed by the Austro-Hungarian Legation in Sofia repeatedly attempted to destroy the railway line upon which the Serbs depended for supplies from their allies through Salonika. . .'<sup>40</sup> What had happened in one war could easily, in Swire's active imagination, happen in another. In the spring of 1940, therefore, Swire contacted 'Jock' Balfour, since 1938 attached to the College of Imperial Defence. The result of these contacts was that Swire submitted the following confidential memorandum to the Foreign Office.

Mr Swire puts forward the following for consideration.

1) Traffic destined for Germany and passing either by way of the Danube or over Bulgarian railways might be interrupted or impeded by certain factions in Bulgaria.

2) The factions referred to are (a) the Shandanovists — the "Diehard" wing of the Pro-togerovist faction and "Old Guard" of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (whose revolutionary traditions and experience are not to be confused with the purely murderous activities of their sworn opponents the Mihailovists); (b) the Velchevists — supporters of the imprisoned leader of the coup d'état of May, 1934 (Colonel Damian Velchev) and amongst whom are many of the ablest Bulgarian officers; (c) certain factions of the Agrarian Party, notably the followers of Nikola Zahariev and Constantin Mouraviev — former ministers. (d) In association with these groups are certain Serb Agrarians and Macedonians in Yugoslavia.

3) The above Bulgarian groups shared (and presumably still share) certain political aims of liberal-radical character and looked for sympathy to France and Great Britain; indeed, in recent years, one of their main aims was to oppose the growth of German influence in Bulgaria. There is every reason to suppose that there are many men in these groups who would require little encouragement to translate into action their long-standing hostility to Germany.

4) The action proposed would consist of the destruction of barges upon the Danube, the blowing up of bridges, and of similar acts in which the groups described have had a vast experience. The precise methods to be employed cannot, of course, be laid down in advance.

5) Financial support would be required — a small initial amount and larger sums according to results. But since a little money goes a long way in the Balkans, very limited sums ought to produce satisfactory results.

<sup>37</sup> Heald to Swire, 22 May 1935. B1/21-2.

<sup>38</sup> Minute by N. J. A. Cheetham on Bentinck to Hoare, 239, 30 Nov. 1935. F O 371/19491.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum by Cheetham, 8 June 1936. F O 371/20369.

<sup>40</sup> *Quarterly Review*, July 1939, p. 9.



6) Objection may be raised to the project upon the grounds that it would be an infringement of Bulgarian neutrality towards the allies. There would be a technical infringement of Bulgarian neutrality to the extent that any organisation would be in receipt of money and encouragement from the Allies, but foreign subsidies to one or other faction in Bulgaria have been the rule rather than the exception for many years: moreover, similar action was organized in Bulgaria by the Central Powers against Serbian communications in 1914, a year before Bulgaria entered the World War. And as regards any effect upon the Bulgarian official attitude, it seems doubtful whether such action would materially alter that attitude even if Allied complicity was discovered—and there is in any case no reason why proofs of it should be discovered.

7) All initial arrangements might be made in and from Belgrade. Money might be made available through private individuals and the British authorities might be screened so that they could deny all responsibility.

8) Swire . . . is . . . well known to the leaders of these groups and has their confidence because he was expelled on their account. Being a journalist it would not be difficult for him to find suitable "cover" for any activities which might be approved.<sup>41</sup>

The Foreign Office was not yet ready for such schemes, though a few months later they were under active discussion<sup>42</sup>, though Swire took no part in them. Throughout the rest of the war, in fact, he seems to have spent his time in minor training posts with little use being made of his expert knowledge of Bulgaria and the Balkans. Swire blamed the prejudices of the British establishment for this neglect. Complaining of the fact that nothing further had been heard of his scheme for sabotage in Bulgaria, he wrote,

I have a close and rather unique connection with various elements in the Balkans — elements violently opposed to Germany and Italy but (I speak from close study of the subject) very little understood and generally ignored by our own officials (possibly because our officials traditionally dislike tiresome revolutionaries, people with "causes", and critics of ruling castes.)<sup>43</sup>

After the war Swire believed there was hope for a new beginning in Anglo-Bulgarian relations and in this he was once again encouraged and inspired by his old friend and hero, Damian Velchev, who wrote to Swire on October 11, 1945:

Bulgaria has but few friends in England so that English public opinion is not well acquainted with us. But I know that there are high-minded Englishmen who know and esteem the Bulgarian people. I believe that you are one of them.<sup>44</sup>

Swire did take some steps to try and plead Bulgaria's cause in the immediate post-war period, at least when Velchev was still in office as Minister of War. In October 1945 he welcomed the publication in *The Manchester Guardian* of a letter from Mr John D. Mack, M P, arguing for the return to Bulgaria of western Thrace. Swire also wrote privately to the editor of that important newspaper.

The Bulgarian masses are a peace-loving and extremely democratic peasantry (by no manner of means Communist) who have been tricked into three wars by a megalomaniac monarchy. Small wonder Bulgaria has now voted herself a republic! Tsar Ferdinand was crafty. His son, Boris, was his master in subtlety and deceit, dissimulating the dictatorial powers which he exercised behind a facade of democracy, dividing to rule, dominating the marionettes of parliament, press and public office by the ready guns of a secret police — a terrorist organisation masquerading as the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation it had supplanted — and beguiling with fair words and democratic gestures many a visitor from western Europe, among them in-

<sup>41</sup> Swire to Foreign Office, 14 April 1940. B5/14-15.

<sup>42</sup> The British were amazingly reluctant to involve themselves in Bulgaria 'and no sabotage had been undertaken by the time German troops entered Bulgaria in March 1941' Elizabeth Barker. *British Policy in South Eastern Europe in the Second World War*. London, 1976, p. 44. Even as late as August 1941, the Foreign Office was still opposing efforts to stimulate resistance in Bulgaria. . .;—Yugoslav-Bulgarian Relation through British Eyes, 1940-45; paper read to the Conference on History and Historians of Eastern Europe, London, 1983, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Swire to J. P. L. Thomas, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr Anthony Eden, 14 May 1940. B5/18.

<sup>44</sup> Velchev to Swire, 11 Oct. 1945, B5/7.



fluent members of our Labour Party. How all this was done by a monarch and a few hundreds of mercenary henchmen it would take much space to tell. . .<sup>45</sup>

Things were, Swire believed, about to improve.

Tsar Boris is now dead — not, I think, by accident. His entourage have faced firing squads. The head of secret diplomacy and criminality was very small indeed — a few hundred st. It was clear, in 1934, that this head must be lopped off and I myself said so to Velchev. But he was ever reluctant to shed blood. . .

In short, then, Bulgaria was led into war, at the side of Germany, by a handful of adventurers. Directly she was able she overthrew and liquidated them. Then she did her uttermost to “work her passage home.” That Russian influence in Bulgaria is now strong is natural — first, because Russia liberated Bulgaria from the Turks . . . and the Bulgarians are a grateful people, close to Russia geographically, racially and linguistically: and secondly, because we ourselves play our cards badly. . . .

My plea, then, is for a friendly hand to Bulgaria. She has purged herself. She aspires to better things. There is much that is admirable in her people. She has courageous leaders with high ideals and proved motives, who deserve confidence. Surely we should now cease to carp and sneer and extend, instead, the encouraging hand of friendship?<sup>46</sup>

There can be no doubt that in many of his political judgements, statements and actions Swire can be accused of naivety and hot-headedness. His admiration of Velchev was so intense that it prevented the asking of some important questions, more especially as to the degree of support Velchev enjoyed amongst the masses;<sup>47</sup> the Aegean scheme was impossible given British interests in Keeping Cyprus; and British diplomacy in Bulgaria, though unadventurous and lacking in imagination, was more rational than Swire would admit. Nevertheless, there would be few who would want to reject his plea for the extending of the hand of friendship and it is the hope of this author that his own contribution to this volume will help to do that, at least in the world of historical scholarship.

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<sup>45</sup> Swire to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 Oct. 1946. Art/2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> For recent assessments of the Velchev regime see. И. Димитров. Българската демократична общественост, фашизмът и войната. 1934—1939. С. 1974; В. Митев. Утвърждаване на монархо-фашистката диктатура в България. 1934—1936. С., 1977.



## IMAGES OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY BULGARIA IN AMERICAN TRAVEL ACCOUNTS

PHILIP SHASHKO (USA)

Scholars have not yet ascertained when the first mention and writings on Bulgaria and the Bulgarians were published in the New World. It is known, however, that books and articles exist written by Americans before the nineteenth century dealing with the Balkans in general and Bulgaria in particular. Americans interested in the fate of the Balkan peoples always had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with Southeastern Europe. The special linguistic, socio-political and cultural relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom facilitated the continuous flow and exchange of books and ideas across the Atlantic. Many early English publications found their way in American homes and private and public institutions and libraries. These writings, together with those of American authors, formed the bases for the American reading public to acquire some knowledge about medieval Bulgaria as well as Bulgaria under Ottoman rule.

This essay presents American images of nineteenth-century Bulgarian history and culture as they were portrayed in a few typical travel accounts published during the nineteenth century. Although the books examined here did not deal exclusively with Bulgaria, they contain enough varied and sufficient material to render a portrait of the American representation of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. Scholarly historical, geographical books and articles as well as the writings of American missionaries, diplomats and well-known journalists whose writings form the bulk of works on Bulgaria are not examined in this paper. Travel accounts published in newspapers and journals are also not considered here.<sup>1</sup>

American travel accounts on Bulgaria published in the nineteenth century are few. The hundreds of American nineteenth century travel accounts dealing with the Ottoman Empire treat Bulgaria, if at all, only in passing. The American travel accounts of the first half of the nineteenth century on the Ottoman Empire show that American travellers were barely aware of the existence of the Bulgarian people. For most of them Bulgaria was just a province of the empire where some Christian people lived also. The American traveller had not knowledge that the Bulgarian people had a distinctness of its own and was in the process of reconstructing the various national institutions. This changed as the American newspapers commenced printing more news about the Balkans, especially during the Crimean War and the events of the second half of the 1870's.

<sup>1</sup> Бж. Ш а ш к о. P., Bulgaria in American Geographical Publications of the Last Decade of the Eighteenth and the First Half of the Nineteenth Centuries. — In: (Walter W. Kolar, ed.) Culture and History of the Bulgarian People: Their Bulgarian and American Parallels. Papers presented at a Symposium, Pittsburgh. Tamburitz Press, Duquesne University Tamburitzane Institute of Folk Arts, 1982, pp. 31—43.



The writings of the American travellers, both those which are one paragraph only and those which have detailed accounts almost always had something to say on the matter of national character, the daily life of the people, Bulgaria's medieval heritage, Ottoman oppression, the political and religious state of the country and especially the Bulgarian landscape. They made comparisons between the Bulgarians and other ethnic groups they had come into contact. Many of the accounts reflect the situation of the country when the visit took place, or when the accounts were written for publication.

In the late eighteenth forties the American writer William F u r n i s s travelled through the Ottoman domain. Going down the Danube he passed by the city of Vidin by moonlight, "catching a beautiful view of its twenty-two minarets, gleaming richly under its silvery frosting; at which point Bulgarian Turkey begins. . .". He praised Silistra's "fine fortress" and Varna's "novelty and charming variety." The author found the Bulgarian side of the Danube more "varied and picturesque" than the Romanian side.<sup>2</sup>

By the time of the Crimean War the interest and curiosity of Americans in the Eastern Question and the fate of the peoples under Ottoman rule had increased. One of the first more detailed travel accounts of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians during this period was that of James O. N o y e s. He was an American physician imbued with the spirit of adventure who, for a time, during the Crimean War, served as a surgeon in the Ottoman army. Noyes, together with his friend and travelling companion Wesley Smead, journeyed extensively in the Balkans, especially in Romania and Bulgaria. In writing his impressions, Noyes wanted to give "a truthful picture" of everyday life of the people among whom he travelled, "especially the *poetical* nations of the Lower Danube, whose names are scarcely known to American readers." Noyes was a doctor who had wide-ranging interests. In his travels he was interested more with the "beliefs and sentiments" of his fellow-beings, with their songs, traditions, and pastime amusements than with the "dry details of governments."<sup>3</sup>

Noyes' first contact with Bulgaria occurred as he approached Vidin streaming down the Danube. The city appeared as "a genuine Turkish city" with a population of about twenty thousand souls and the residence of a "Greek Bishop". As his boat approached the city, "the magnificence" of Vidin he saw from a distance disappeared.<sup>4</sup> The doctor showed greater interest in the natural scenery than in the city. The action of water, assisted by other natural causes had produced on the Bulgarian hills "curious and fantastic shapes", which, in many instances, had "the exact resemblances of military works."<sup>5</sup> Noyes visited Lom, Nikopol, and other cities and made observations about the past and present condition of these places. The old cities consisted, according to Noyes, of three parts: the *grad* or fortress, occupying the most elevated position; and "barosch" or lower city, and the *palanke* or suburbs outside the city proper where the lower classes resided. The old cities were destroyed during the Ottoman conquest and were never rebuilt. The contemporary cities were of "genuine Turkish character", unaffected by European ideas. The author regarded Ruse as the most important transportation center on the Lower Danube and noted its morocco and silk factories.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> W. F u r n i s s. *Land Voieglee: or, Views Across the Sea*. N. Y., Appleton, 1850, pp. 194—197. Вж. също труда му *The Old World or Scenes and Cities in Foreign Lands*. N. Y., Appleton, 1850.

<sup>3</sup> Вж. предговора J. O. N o y e s в труда му *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk, Comprising Adventures in Eastern Europe and Western Asia*. N. Y., Rudd and Carleton, 1850. Hereafter cited as Noyes.

<sup>4</sup> N o y e s, pp. 69-94.

<sup>5</sup> N o y e s, pp. 77—78.

<sup>6</sup> N o y e s, pp. 87—88.



Noyes devoted twenty-six pages describing Silistra. The ravages of war were to be seen everywhere. As the author passed through the city gates, it seemed to him "as if the genius of death reigned within those solitary walls" of the city-fortress where "people glide along the narrow streets and stony lanes more like ghosts than human beings."<sup>7</sup> He was surprised to find that there was not one hotel or lodging of any kind in the city owned or managed by a Christian. The Turkish part was "filthy and dusty," while the houses of the Bulgarians were low cabins with windowless court-yards.<sup>8</sup>

Noyes was very much aware of the terrible sufferings that war brought on the people. As he passed through the city of Svishtov he compared the beautiful vineyards around the town with the destruction produced by war. The Russo-Turkish war, he wrote, "from a war of monarchs, came so near merging into a war of races."<sup>9</sup> Going through the Bulgarian countryside, the American physician wrote: "There is but one sight more sad than that of deserted cities and villages: it is to behold well-filled cities of the dead in places once busy with life — to step from gravestone to gravestone in solitudes once throbbing with multitudes of human beings. This sense of loneliness in the wilds of Bulgaria often weighed upon me with a secret terror."<sup>10</sup>

Noyes was critical of the Turkish rule of Bulgaria. He stated that Ottoman administrators, like the governor of Silistra, Ibrahim Pasha, were people of "the most profound incapacity."<sup>11</sup> Most of the officials, the author wrote, were "taken from the very dregs of society" who "suck the very vitals of their provinces."<sup>12</sup> From the conquest to the present, he wrote, Bulgaria has suffered under the Ottomans: "Bulgaria is a desert of Islam — not a desert of sand but of rich, uncultivated waster. Populous cities sprang up in the time of the ancient kings, some of which did not lose their importance until long after the Turks encamped in Europe. With the Moslem invasion, however, expired the Bulgarian spirit. Their ancient renown passed away before the rapid *essor* of Ottoman conquest. Many of their cities and villages were swept away, while others, left untenanted and alone, have so mouldered into dust that not a trace of them remains."<sup>13</sup>

The American had an inquisitive mind and could not but search for Bulgaria's "monuments of her ancient power". Although he could not find much, Noyes noted that "among the Balkans the traveler now and then meets with reminiscences of the Slavo-Bulgaric rule in the primitive customs, and traditions of the people, and the crumbling remains of a rude and ancient architecture."<sup>14</sup> Noyes observed the existence of a large number of *tumuli*, conical mounds (*tepe* in Turkish and *Hunka* in Bulgarian or graves of the Huns) in the Bulgarian countryside: "Ask the Bulgarian peasant who erected them, and he will answer, 'God only knows..' My imagination, however, associated these mysterious monuments with ancient Scythian heroes and Bulgarians kings. . . These silent watchmen of the Bulgarian plains may have witnessed *adieux* as touching as those of Hector and Andromache; heroes as noble as Ajax and Ilus may sleep beneath them; but unlike Ajax Telamon and the Trojan kings, their deeds have been embalmed in no immortal Iliad."<sup>15</sup>

Noyes could not but notice the memorials of cruelty and oppression in more modern times. He described one such monument for the American reader in very

<sup>7</sup> Noyes, pp. 240-241.

<sup>8</sup> Noyes, p. 245.

<sup>9</sup> Noyes, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Noyes, p. 280.

<sup>11</sup> Noyes, p. 246.

<sup>12</sup> Noyes, p. 250.

<sup>13</sup> Noyes, p. 281.

<sup>14</sup> Noyes, pp. 281-282.

<sup>15</sup> Noyes, pp. 333-334.



emotional terms: "Far away in the northward, near the Servo-Bulgarian frontier, there is an immense conical mound formed of twenty thousand human skulls. Whitened by the snow and rain, it gleams on the plains of Nissa like a tower of Parian marble. The winds from the mountains, sighing through the innumerable cavities of the skeleton heads, give them doleful, doleful voices. To a few still cling locks of hair, like mosses and lichens, which, floating in the wind, add unspeakable horror to this most barbarous monument. The twenty thousand Servian and Bulgarian warriors who fell, fighting heroically on the plain of Nissa, were worthy of a better mausoleum. The Turks point to it proudly to this monument of their own erecting as a memorial of their prowess. The Servians, now independent, point to it with equal pride as proof of the cost of liberty, and an eloquent incentive to its preservation. Bulgaria will likewise one day be free, and her rude children will chant the songs of liberty, around this monument of cruelty."<sup>16</sup> Noyes not only condemned the Ottoman system but he believed that the Bulgarian people would, one day, be free and independent. He was aware of the existence of *haiduks* in the Bulgarian lands and of the striving of the people to be free. Not all Bulgarians had totally submitted to the conquerors. In the Balkan Mountains, which "signify *mountains of defense*," the Bulgarians retained "to a greater or lesser extend their ancient privileges."<sup>17</sup>

The American physician was very impressed with the natural beauty of the land and its rich resources. He thought that there can be "no fairer" place than the Balkans: "It is endowed with the eternal advantages of nature. Washed by the Euxine, the Aegean, and the Adriatic, and boasting of the noblest rivers and richest plains, its commercial and agricultural resources are not surpassed by any other part of the globe. The northern slope of the Balkans is covered with rich forests. A deep humus extends almost up to their summits. And southward, 'while the mountaineer kindles his fire on the glaciers, the olive, the fig, and the pomegranate grow below in the valleys that know no winter.' There is a land of gentle breezes, of purple skies, of all the soft delights of the great-eyed Orient." However, under Turkish rule, "which consumeth for ever, the monuments of ancient art and power have mouldered away." The former hum of business and noise of commerce had been replaced by "the silence of death" and the sites of populous cities were marked only by "the silent cities of the dead."<sup>18</sup>

Noyes was not just a spectator of the past or of nature. He attempted to become acquainted with the life of the simple Bulgarian peasant. At one time instead of staying in Turkish *khans*, he "sought out the humble cottages of the Bulgarians, experiencing everywhere the hospitality which is proverbial in the East." He quoted with great approval "the poetical description" of the Bulgarian way of life by a previous and illustrious visitor of this land—Cyprian Robert.<sup>19</sup> The huts in which Noyes stayed were "as clean and as neatly arranged inside as they can be made by the indefatigable *baba*." Noyes agreed with Robert that Bulgarian women were "gentle, compassionate, and laborious. . . They are next to the Greeks, the handsomest women in European Turkey, and are especially remarkable for the length and luxuriance of their hair, with which they could literally cover themselves as with a garment: it often sweeps the ground below their feet." Noyes believed that the Bulgarians between the Danube and the Balkan mountains numbered four and a half millions. These "cultivators of the soil" even though less civilized than the Greeks, were "more consistent in their political views."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Noyes, pp. 281-282.

<sup>17</sup> Noyes, p. 348.

<sup>18</sup> Noyes, pp. 282-283.

<sup>19</sup> Noyes, p. 348.

<sup>20</sup> Noyes, pp. 352-354.



Though the Bulgarians were "wedded to peace, they have not forgotten that their ancestors established an ancient kingdom along the Danube; that their armies have more than once carried terror to the rulers of Byzantium. To them belongs the northern slope of the Balkans; but they have also penetrated Thrace, Epirus and Macedonia." However, the Bulgarians were "too weak to avail themselves of their numerical superiority, too timid to fly to independence, they show a disposition to fraternize with the Greeks and the Servians." Their observation prompted the American to state that in the maritime character of the Greeks, the pastoral disposition of the Serbs and the agricultural tendency of the Bulgarians can be found "the elements of a great people, for the establishment of whose power nothing but union is necessary." If these three peoples become "amalgamated" then Ottoman authority in Europe would come to an end.<sup>21</sup>

Noyes, who came to know the Bulgarians better than any other American until the arrival of the missionaries, sympathized with their struggle for independence, recognized their right as well as the right of all oppressed peoples to free themselves. The American wrote in his travel account: "Every stroke of the axe, every stroke upon the anvil is, from the mysterious connexion of things, a blow upon the brazen shield of tyranny. When the last despot shall have passed away, and men learn the art of war no more, the nations can beat their swords into ploughshares: but before the dawn of that auspicious day the down-trodden million of Europe must beat *ploughshares into swords* and reach freedom through the red waves and fiery surges of revolution."<sup>22</sup>

Travelling and living in Bulgaria during the Crimean War, Noyes could not but make observation on the Eastern Question and the role the great powers played in Southeastern Europe. England and France as the allies of Turkey were attempting to prevent Russia from gaining a decisive position in Southeastern Europe. Noyes recognized Russia's role in the Balkans. Whatever "secret purposes in the past", and whatever her aims in the future, Russia, wrote Noyes, "has been of lasting service to European Turkey." Russia, according to the author, had played both a positive and a negative role in the Balkans. She, "more than all other powers combined" brought back to the Greek "the thought of his heroic origin," and "awakened" in the Slav "the remembrance of his ancient dominion." Moreover, Russia, "has given laws and organization to the *klephts* of the mountains, and inspiring somewhat of her own barbaric courage in the timid Wallachs and Bulgarians of the plains, has taught them to aspire to equality with their Turkish lords. Even the rude shocks of war have tended to arouse the dormant energies of these Christian races. . . The normal spontaneous progress exhibited by European Turkey, slight though it be, is mainly owing to Russian influence."<sup>23</sup> The American surgeon, proud of American democratic traditions and critical of Russian imperial despotism, believed that Russia, by becoming herself thoroughly civilized would be able to bring about "the blending of the East and the West" and thus make her contribution to world civilization.<sup>24</sup>

George Buckham travelled through Bulgaria in May, 1869. He writes in his *Notes from a Journey of a Tourist* that Morris, the American minister to the Sublime Porte, informed him that it was unsafe and even dangerous to travel outside the cities and towns of the Ottoman Empire "without strong guards." The American representative gave him much information "of great interest" as to the condition of the Turkish state, "its peculiar government and people, its beauties, agriculture, laws, and products." Buckham believed that the "semi-barbarous rule

<sup>21</sup> Noyes, p. 352.

<sup>22</sup> Noyes, pp. 518-519.

<sup>23</sup> Noyes, pp. 517-518.

<sup>24</sup> Noyes, p. 519.



of the Turk" owed its "existence and retention" to the vigilant jealousies of the great powers of Europe who did not want to disturb the balance of power in this part of the world.<sup>25</sup> Buckham wrote that Varna, "a fortified seaport," like most Oriental places, looked best from a distance. He noted the palace of the Pasha of Varna, the mosques, and the "red-tiled" roofs of the houses which looked picturesque. Like most of the other travellers he was impressed by the "unceasing variety of charming scenery. . . mountains, hills, valleys of surpassing beauty. . . What surprised and impressed him most was the fact that here he saw a truly magnificent and highly cultivated region "in which all the elements of splendid picturesque scenery and agricultural wealth seemed to be combined." The Bulgarians in the cities "present a very different appearance in many respects from those we saw in other parts of the empire. Physically, they appear to be superior, and in customs altogether different, dressing more like the people of Western Europe."<sup>26</sup> The Europeanization of the Bulgarian city ports on the Danube had, by the middle of the century, progressed far enough to be noticed by almost all of the travellers.

William Henry Seward, the American statesman and secretary of state, in his travels around the world passed through Bulgaria also. In his travel account there are some scanty references to Bulgaria. When he arrived in Varna, he noted the importance of the city as a port and railroad center. Commenting on Ruse, Seward said that the city had "the appearance of much activity" and presented "less an oriental than European aspect. . . Minarets are less frequent and spires of Christian churches take their place." According to the American politician, Ottoman rule in Europe "has been prolonged chiefly by means of her European allies, a hundred years." However, Seward believed that Bulgaria was "practically independent of the Turkish Empire" and that Ottoman rule "will ultimately disappear from Europe," because "it is. . . only too palpable that the closer the approach which the Turkish Empire may make toward the ideas and principles of the West, the more its European provinces will be emboldened to shake off its sway altogether. . ."<sup>27</sup>

Henry Day, an American lawyer, noted in his travel account the progress made by the Bulgarians in their struggle for an independent church. The Bulgarians, he wrote, "have at length resisted (Greek control of their churches) and determined to have native priests and have driven out the foreign Greek priests."<sup>28</sup> Henry Field, in a very popular travel account, expressed his indignation of the atrocities committed by the Turks in Bulgaria. He wrote that "Circassians and Bashi Bazouks were marched" into Bulgaria and commenced "a series of massacres that have thrilled Europe with horror" and "laid waste with fire and slaughter" the "peaceful country." These massacres were due to the fact that the Turk had "not changed his nature in the four hundred years that he has lived or rather camped in Europe." The only way to put an end to such tragedies, he suggested, was for the great powers to enforce large-scale reforms supported by an armed force stationed in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>29</sup>

Joseph Moore, an American journalist who accompanied Ulysses S. Grant, the American general and president of the United States, on a trip around the

<sup>25</sup> G. Buckham. *Notes from A Journey of a Tourist*. N. Y., G. Houston, 1890, p. 390-391.

<sup>26</sup> Buckham, pp. 394-395.

<sup>27</sup> O. R. Seward. (ed. William H.) *Seward's Travels Around the World*. N. Y., Appleton, 1873, 654-657.

<sup>28</sup> H. Day. *A Lawyer Abroad: What to See and How to See*. N. Y., Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878, p. 261.

<sup>29</sup> H. Field. *From the Lakes of Killarney to the Golden Horn*. N. Y., Scribners, 1876. 10th ed., 345-350.



World, noted another aspect of the suffering of the Bulgarians. While in Beirut, he wrote, "not a little excitement" was produced by the arrival in the city of more than two thousand "villanous types" of Circassians from Bulgaria. The author noted that one sixteen year old Circassian "boasted in the street that he alone had decapitated five Bulgarian children. Another of these inhuman people offered for sale a Bulgarian Christian girl. . . Many of them offered for sale chalices and other articles of church service, the booty of their work of destruction." The author also wrote that when the Austrian Lloyd steamer arrived "brought a number of captive Bulgarians who were chained together in gangs. One died in the voyage and it was necessary to file his irons apart from the living. These captives were bound for the prison at Sidon and while they were in transit fourteen more died from hardship and exposure."<sup>30</sup>

Many Americans visiting the Ottoman capital passed through Varna and Ruse. George Moerlein was no exception. Although his knowledge of the Bulgarians was limited he wrote that the Bulgarians were "a race of sturdy mountaineers" and under an illustration of a portrait of a "Bulgarian" in his book, he wrote that the Bulgarian "is a fine specimen of manhood, bold and fearless, and an excellent soldier in battle."<sup>31</sup> Mrs. Amos R. Little, who passed through the same area, noted that it was a "very pretty rolling country" nearly all under cultivation. She was impressed by the fact that Bulgarian farms were not fenced, dividing one from the other. This, she said, made the scenery more beautiful.<sup>32</sup>

Carter Harrison came in contact with Bulgarians on the streets of Istanbul and the surrounding areas. He described them as shepherds, "heavy and stupid, whose every breath is a hurricane of garlic."<sup>33</sup> From Istanbul he travelled to Bulgaria by ship. As the ship approached Varna, the city looked "pretty," but he was told that it was "dirty and unattractive within." Bad weather prevented the visitor to visit the review parade in which the prince of Bulgaria, Ferdinand, participated. He wished to see, how the people looked upon "their exotic ruler." He was opposed to the whole system of "transplanting" of foreign princes to rule over others. He did not like any of the princes drawn from the royal houses of Denmark or Germany. He thought that kings "tricked" the masses with shows and parades and people were fools for being deceived. He did not like the military also because there was "something in their trade utterly abhorrent to my Republican heart." Harrison liked the scenery from Varna to Ruse: "The railroad leads through the hills at Varna up a very pretty valley. . . interesting scenery, nothing grand, but a succession of broad valleys, well covered with fields, and overlooked by tall, rugged hills. . . clothed now in small bushes, and then lifting in rocky precipices often rendered very striking by their embattled looking walls, being deeply pierced by caves in great numbers, looking as if cut by hand. Herds of cattle and large numbers of horses were constantly seen, and several pretty villages now all decked in bunting and garlands. This up country is of very rich land, and highly productive. The wheat, rye, and oats on it were all well set and finely green, and the vineyards healthy looking. Trees are not wanting, and the stretches of rolling country often seen for ten to fifteen miles were exceedingly pretty." Harrison recommended that Americans should make the trip "far more often than they do for the scenery" and not do as the majority of tourists do, rush through it on

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<sup>30</sup> J. Moore. *Outlying Europe and the Nearer Orient: A Narrative of Recent Travel*. Philadelphia. Lippincott, 1880, pp. 183-184.

<sup>31</sup> G. Moerlein. *A Trip Around the World*. Cincinnati. M. and R. Burghelm Publishers, 1886, p. 172, 188-189.

<sup>32</sup> A. R. Little. *The World As We Saw It*. Boston, Cupples and Co., 1887, pp. 388-389.

<sup>33</sup> C. Harrison. *A Race with the Sun*. N. Y., Putnam's Sons, 1889, p. 330.



the Orient Express but at a slower pace because it "is a printed page from which much can be learned if carefully studied."<sup>34</sup>

P. L. G r o o m e, who passed through Bulgaria by train, was very critical of the customs and railroad officials. He complained that his passport was stamped twice and his luggage examined at two different locations and the stations were dark at night and cold.<sup>35</sup> The Baptist minister Walter A. W h i t t l e noted in his travel account that "some parts" of the Danube in the Balkans was "finer than anything on the Rhine." He did not like almost anything else he saw in South-eastern Europe. He wrote that the "principal productions of Servia, Slavonia, Rumelia, and Bulgaria, seem to me to be ignorance, turnips, soldiers, poodle dogs, and an annual crop of semi-royal, throne-seeking dudes." He stated that he "would rather own a thousand acres of black land in Texas. or be a well-to-do farmer in Blue Grass, Kentucky, than to have ten such thrones as all these petty kingdoms combined could offer." Such declarations showed his sense of American nationalism and republicanism and not an understanding of Southeastern Europe.<sup>36</sup>

Samuel M u t c h m o r e, an eminent Presbyterian clergyman, took a trip around the world in 1887. One of his main concerns was the state of religion, religious institutions, and the activities of the American missionaries in the countries he visited. In his book *A Visit of Japheth to Shem and Ham* he allotted about thirty pages to his visit of Bulgaria. Mutchmore stated that the countries of the Lower Danube were "little known" to Americans and it was only due to the events of the last few decades that Americans became interested in the area. Mutchmore arrived in Ruse from Romania. He wrote that the city was "full of the history of long and dreary oppressions and atrocities." Ruse, the author said, was situated upon as "pretty a spot as is to be found on the globe, on an abrupt bank of limestone rocks high above the Danube, so that the stretches of the beautiful river may be seen for miles."<sup>37</sup> The environmental beauty could not be matched with the city itself because the former capital of Ottoman Danubean Bulgaria was "a heap of Turkish dirt and ruins, for the Turk never cleans away anything, he simply climbs upon it." He was impressed by the work of the new Bulgarian administration. He wrote that in "free Bulgaria" the city was going through a "metamorphosis." He saw new and beautiful buildings being built in the city by the Bulgarians themselves.<sup>38</sup>

Mutchmore was very impressed by the natural beauty of the "magnificent country" from Ruse to the Black Sea, with its "wealth of fruit and its lines of beauty." However, in "this beautiful country, as God has made it," the one-handed wooden ploughs were "still used as they appear in the hieroglyphic inscriptions in Egypt." The Bulgarians had no incentive to change, to enrich themselves because "the struggle has only been for existence since the Turk conquered" them, for had they produced more the Turks would take it. In Bulgaria, from end to end "one sees mud or stone huts about ten feet high, hatched with reeds, or the stocks of marsh flags or bulrushes, with the ground for the floor, teeming with fleas and often reeking in dirt." The author blamed the Turks for all these huts which "disfigure the finest country on earth."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Harrison, pp. 348-358.

<sup>35</sup> L. P. G r o o m e. *Rambles of a Southerner in Three Continents* Greensboro. Thomas Brothers, Book and Job Printers, 1889. pp. 290-291.

<sup>36</sup> W. A. Whittle. *A Baptist Abroad or Travels and Adventures in Europe and All Bible Lands*, N. Y., J. A. Hill and Co., 1890. pp. 223-224.

<sup>37</sup> S. Mutchmore. *A Visit of Japheth to Shem and Ham*. Philadelphia. Presbyterian Publishing Company, 1890. 2nd, ed., pp. 316-317.

<sup>38</sup> Mutchmore, p. 317.

<sup>39</sup> Mutchmore, pp. 317-318.



One of Mutchmore's favorite topics was Orthodoxy and the work of the American missionaries in Bulgaria. While visiting Romania, Mutchmore already in describing Romanian Orthodoxy, wrote that "the Greek priest lives nowhere where there is any progress; he would not be healthy in it."<sup>40</sup> He had a preconceived view that Orthodoxy must be replaced by Protestantism in its American versions. Writing about the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Mutchmore stated that it was "a bundle of dissolving ignorance, its life is malarious." With very few exceptions, he said, the Bulgarian clergymen, were "ignorant, superstitious, lazy and low, and often came out of the dregs rather than the heads of society." This was the reason for the "demoralization" of the masses. The American clergyman believed and hoped that the power of the Orthodox Church would be broken. In his view this was not too difficult because there was no real religion in the country. The Church was "rapidly losing all hold on the popular mind." The strength of the Orthodox Church was in the villages "where people are ignorant and superstitious, but it weakens in proportion to the size and culture of the towns." The establishment of the independent Bulgarian Church in the 1870's was "one of those ebullitions which end in nothing" because the people in "casting away old oppressions" gained nothing better. The Bulgarian nation, according to the American clergyman needed not "desolation" but "reformation." There was hope, with the aid of the American missionaries, this reformation would become a reality. "The Bulgations," wrote Mutchmore, "notwithstanding all these and other disabilities, are more accessible to Christianity than any of their neighbors, they are more brainy and manly and have more in them worth saving than any of their neighbors."<sup>41</sup> The Americans, through their missionary activity, publications, and Robert College would help the new, free, "redeemed Bulgaria" to become "the wonder of all the Danubean provinces."<sup>42</sup>

Mutchmore admitted that the Bulgarians themselves were working hard to change and modernize their country. The author presented some aspects of Bulgaria's history to prove some of his preconceived notions. Bulgaria's awakening was "inspired by the great Pan-Sclavistic idea" and her "small revolution" was "instigated by Russia." He recognized that Russia "espoused ostensibly the cause of Bulgaria" and through the Treaty of San Stephano the country was freed from the Turks. Mutchmore blamed the powers, especially England, for the failure of San Stephano. The American thought that the powers "had no right" and "no good reason" to intervene and save Turkey. At the Congress of Berlin the powers proceeded to divide up the domains of a sovereign Power to suit themselves, and to denude another nation of all the fruits of her losses and victories." He thought this was unprecedented for "nothing like it has ever occurred in the history of the world." To the American this was like the divisions of Poland.<sup>43</sup>

Mutchmore praised Alexander Battenberg for his efforts to maintain the independence of Bulgaria and was critical of Russia's policies. One of the reasons for his anti-Russian attitude was his fear that if Russia played a dominant role in Bulgaria, the Protestants would not be free to continue their missionary work.<sup>44</sup> Notwithstanding the difficulties the Bulgarians had to face, Mutchmore believed, Bulgaria would be able to solve her problems. The Bulgarian people, he wrote, "are bright — more than bright. They have a better intellectual development than any of their neighbors, are industrious, and ambitious both to know and to do." The Bulgarians were "physically superior, better dressed, and the better

<sup>40</sup> Mutchmore, p. 316.

<sup>41</sup> Mutchmore, p. 335.

<sup>42</sup> Mutchmore, p. 317.

<sup>43</sup> Mutchmore, pp. 322-323.

<sup>44</sup> Mutchmore, p. 334.



classes are more rapidly becoming European." Bulgaria was in a period of transition "like a bird putting its head out of its shell — only the head is out, the body is still fettered in the filthy prison house of the past."<sup>45</sup>

The Europeanization of the Bulgarians was proceeding faster than in other countries because the Bulgarians were "a reading people, more than any other in Eastern Europe." Mutchmore described how the Bulgarian people under the Ottoman rule taxed themselves to support their independent schools. The "pride of every village was the school-house." This national preoccupation with culture "will bring forth an intellectual regeneration, and if the church does its duty they will go together and will yet make Bulgaria the Star of the East."<sup>46</sup>

Another American clergyman who travelled to Bulgaria also noted some contradictions in Bulgarian life. While in Bulgaria, Daniel M a r c h made "long journeys" in a phaeton drawn by four horses which was "as good as any in America." However, in the same country he "crossed the Shipka pass of the Balkan Mountains drawn by four oxen at a pace so slow that a moderate walk would leave it far behind." He saw similar contradictions everywhere he turned. "The galloping horses," he wrote, "on the dusty plain and the laboring oxen on the rugged mountain made no greater contrast than the palace of the prince in the city and the hovel of the peasant in the villages of the same country."<sup>47</sup>

Poutney B i g e l o w was a journalist who used a canoe for a trip down the Danube in the 1890's to report on the Balkan scenery and politics. In his *Paddles and Politics Down the Danube*, he described what he saw and heard along the banks of the great river. Bigelow, like many other travellers, was introduced to Bulgaria by stopping at Vidin. As the current bore him nearer to the city, he saw that "through the medium of smoke there arose . . . a city of transcendent beauty, of palaces, and castles, minarets and towers; strange battlements and oriental cupolas". The city seemed "at every angle brilliant with color and precious stones." However, he was soon dissatisfied when he landed in the city. He saw dirt on the streets and "wretched huts." Vidin remained still an Oriental city even though Bulgaria "struggles bravely to cast off Turkish allegiance and enter the family of European nations." He was frustrated also because he could not find some good Bulgarian-made product for a gift, most of the things being "cheap stuff of French or German manufacture."<sup>48</sup>

Watching the people on the streets, Bigelow said that the peasant and townspeople adhere "to the dress of their ancestors while the military had adopted Russian fashions." The Bulgarian peasants were not only "highly picturesque but of fine figure as well." The Bulgarian officers "had more swagger about them than those of Germany or France." He was surprised to see in the Eiffel Restaurant the waiters "puffed tobacco smoke as they took the guests' orders, and reclined at full length on a bench in the lull of business." He tried to explain this by making a sarcastic comment that democracy seemed to have made some headway since the liberation of the country. However, the author liked the friendliness and great hospitality of the Bulgarian people he met along the Danube.<sup>49</sup>

Bigelow was anti-Russian and pro-German. He was very critical of Russia's policy in Bulgaria and thought that Germany ought to have the final say in Southeastern Europe. He attempted to explain Bulgarian politics by quoting an

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<sup>45</sup> Mutchmore, p. 318.

<sup>46</sup> Mutchmore, pp. 338-339.

<sup>47</sup> D. March. *Morning Light in Many Lands*. Boston and Chicago. Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1891, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> P. Bigelow. *Paddles and Politics Down the Danube*. N. Y., Charles L. Webster and Company, 1892, pp. 210-211.

<sup>49</sup> Poutney, pp. 212-213.



unnamed Bulgarian diplomat critical of Russian policy toward his country, and hoping that not the Russian Tsar but the German Emperor would become the "Protector of the Danube."<sup>50</sup>

James M. Buckley travelled through Bulgaria in 1888. He believed that each traveller saw "what he took with him," and for this reason he thought that his experiences were worth recording because "several views are more illuminating than one." In his books *Travels in Three Continents: Europe, Africa, Asia* he described his trip through Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria: "The view as we rode along was wonderfully beautiful. Villages and towns are far apart, and one might easily have fancied himself travelling through a succession of parks connected with some ancestral estate, his only perplexity that he saw no house or castle, and few persons." He was impressed by the "immense masses of granite" that surround and underlie Plovdiv. He praised the political "independent existence" of Eastern Rumelia which gave "it much more interest to Western travellers than would have if still a province of Turkey."<sup>51</sup>

He took part in a convention in Sofia of the Bulgarian Protestants and was impressed with their work. However, like Mutchmore, he was very critical of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In his view the Bulgarian Church "was a very low form of Christianity," for which the principles of the Gospel were "concealed under the mask of superstitions; no intelligible instruction is given; pomp, ceremony, priestcraft, support the religion, which exerts little influence over the daily lives of the people, and can afford little or no comfort in their experience of privation and toil."<sup>52</sup>

Sofia, the capital city, did not impress him much. Were it not for the palace, one or two elaborate hotels of an Eastern style, and the Bulgarian letters on the signs, he wrote, it would be easy to "mistake the place for an American prairie town already endeavoring to put on the airs of a city." He was more impressed by the fertility of the land, the number of rivers which flew into the Danube and with the herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. Many Bulgarians, he wrote, were very "striking-looking men." However, the general aspect of the country was "not one of prosperity, and a primitive scene was that of buffaloes drawing carts."<sup>53</sup>

Thomas J. Clayton who visited many countries passed through Bulgaria also. Going from Varna to Ruse and then on to Romania Clayton was "surprised" to discover that both Bulgaria and Romania were "such fertile countries." He wrote that he "never saw better pasture lands or wheat fields" anywhere else in the world. These lands reminded him of the prairie lands of Illinois. He was also surprised to find that there were no farm houses like in America. The lands, he stated, were "tilled by peasants who live in miserable little huts, or in villages. . . Our route lay through a spur of the Balkan Mountains and was very picturesque. . . very beautiful and entertaining. . . The scenery of these mountains is soft and has a soothing rather than a stirring influence upon the beholder." The author believed that if peace prevailed in these parts of the world, Bulgaria and Romania "will soon become rich and prosperous."<sup>54</sup>

There are few more accounts by Americans on Bulgaria. However, they are not much more different than those presented. Many a time what Americans said

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<sup>50</sup> Poutney, pp. 219-225.

<sup>51</sup> J. M. Buckley. *Travels in Three Continents: Europe, Africa and Asia*. N. Y., Eaton and Mains, 1894, pp. 567-568.

<sup>52</sup> Buckley, p. 568.

<sup>53</sup> Buckley, p. 568.

<sup>54</sup> T. J. Clayton. *Rambles and Reflections: Europe from Biscay to the Black Sea and from Aetna to the North Cape with Glimpses of Asia, Africa, America and the Islands of the Sea*. Chester, Pennsylvania, 1894, p. 158.



about the Bulgarians or for that matter about other peoples, reflected on their own personal character or how they valued American culture and way of life. The descriptions presented by these travellers on a variety of topics, like national character and even the history of Bulgaria are hardly scientific or correct accounts.

Almost all of these travellers present nothing but clichés. They did not have the necessary expertise to carefully analyze the Bulgarian personality, their ethnic typicalness in terms of common national cultural values. The frame of reference these travellers used was founded on their perspective of American history and culture as the repositories of values of liberty, freedom, democracy, justice, religion, discipline, industry and progress.

Almost all of the authors sympathized with the plight of the Bulgarian people under Ottoman domination. They all condemned the alien system of despotism and many a time showed their preference for republicanism. The Ottoman system did not permit the development of the individual, the arts and crafts as well as agriculture and industry. The authors were aware that the Ottoman state was in its stages of disintegration. Those who visited Bulgaria before 1878 believed that the Bulgarians would become free and those who travelled after the liberation of the country praised the attempts of the Bulgarians to preserve their independence.

The majority of Americans who wrote on Bulgaria or visited the country showed energy, curiosity, sense of wonder, and faith in the future of Bulgaria and mankind even when they were disappointed in some particular aspect of their travel experience. They considered knowledge, and their travel experiences important, their individual responses and reactions significant and worth preserving. Although they were usually unfamiliar with the Bulgarian language, history and customs, their comments on the Bulgarian character were generally positive. It was difficult for the American traveller, who knew little about the country, to come to terms with the complex cultural milieu of Bulgarians, Greeks, Turks, etc. and to resolve the difference sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant between the Balkan mind cushioned on a multi-layered rich past and a modern American mind formed in the New World free from the burden of the past.<sup>55</sup> The Bulgarians, busy with their struggle to free themselves and maintain their independence, thought little about and did even less to attract tourists.

For the American tourists the Balkans were on the periphery of their travel plans. Most of those who visited the country went there as passers-by and caught only a glimpse of Bulgaria. Bulgaria in the view of the American traveller was either a peasant society or a society in transition with many Oriental traits still present. The Bulgarians were described as simple, natural, methodological, disciplined, and diligent. There were, of course, some descriptions which were tendentious and even misleading. The Orthodox Church was criticized, in part, in the belief that this would make Americans come to the support of the American missionaries working in Bulgaria. However, the commentaries of these pioneer American travellers are not without merit. Through sharing their travel experiences with their countrymen, the American travellers contributed toward making Bulgaria known to Americans. Although most of the descriptions were brief, they nonetheless were good enough to create an image of a country with a long history, a relatively heroic past and a people struggling to free itself, and modernize its country.

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<sup>55</sup> Изключение прави Джеймс Нойс, който е прочел някои от най-важните съчинения за Балканите и Османската империя.